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# Carsey: Family-Friendly Policies Less Available To Rural Working Moms

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## Carsey: Family-Friendly Policies Less Available To Rural Working Moms

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DURHAM, N.H. –For working parents, family-friendly work policies like paid sick days, flexible time, or medical insurance can reduce work-family conflict and lead to less absenteeism and higher productivity. Working parents in rural America, however, have less access to these policies than their urban counterparts, a new report from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire finds.

“Compared to urban mothers, rural mothers are less likely to have access to paid sick days, health insurance, dental insurance, parental leave, flextime, and job training,” says Carsey Institute faculty fellow Rebecca Glauber, author of the policy brief and an assistant professor of sociology at UNH. For instance, she notes, 38 percent of rural workers do not have access to paid sick days; 30 percent of urban workers lack the same access.

The brief finds that single rural mothers fare worst in access to family-friendly policies, primarily because they have less education, work for smaller firms, and work in occupations and industries that are less likely to offer such benefits. Forty-one percent of rural single mothers do not have paid sick days, and more than one-fifth of this group has no paid days off, sick or vacation. “As a result, they may face difficult choices between losing a day of pay and leaving a sick child at home alone,” says Glauber.

Utilizing data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth from 2000 through 2006, the brief notes that almost one-fifth of rural workers do not have health insurance (compared to 16 percent urban), nearly one-third do not have dental insurance (compared to 26 percent urban) and nearly one-half do not have flextime and job training (compared to just over 40 percent urban).

While a number of factors contribute to the rural-urban gap in mothers’ access to family-friendly policies, about half the gap in access to sick or vacation days is due to differences between rural and urban workers’ work establishment size, occupation and industry, and unionization.

Because United States lacks a federal, universal set of family-friendly policies, certain groups or workers have access to family and work policies – like the 1993 Family Medical Leave Act, for employers with 50 or more employees – and other groups of workers do not, the brief finds.

"Access to family-friendly policies is not the only solution to work-family conflict, nor is it without costs," says Glauber. "Still, access holds the promise of significantly improving the health and well-being of workers and families.

The policy brief, "Family-Friendly Policies for Rural Working Mothers," is available to download at [http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB\\_FamilyPolicies\\_09.pdf](http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB_FamilyPolicies_09.pdf).

The Carsey Institute conducts policy and applied research on vulnerable families and on sustainable community development, giving policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities.

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